

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee on the Governor's Budget

Public Hearing Date: February 18, 2016

Joyce Platz – Fairfield, CT 06824

Re: Proposed cuts to Regional Mental Health Boards

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Joyce Platz and I am writing to testify on the budget.

I strongly oppose the proposed cuts to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, in particular the drastic cut in funding for the Regional Mental Health Boards and the Regional Action Councils.

I am writing to you as Immediate Past President and now member of the Executive Committee of the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board, Board of Directors. I can attest first-hand to the importance of the work of the Regional Mental Health Boards, in our communities for some of Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens, those with serious mental illnesses. Our work is focused on advocacy, reducing stigma, providing equal representation of diverse groups of stakeholders, ensuring that the services in the community are of the highest quality and most importantly, that all services are readily available and accessible to all members of our community regardless of their ability to pay. Not only are the Regional Mental Health Boards a valuable resource to our local communities, but they are also the conduit to implement and administer the State mental health needs assessment which is requirement of receiving our federal funding, in essence the required leveraging agent for \$23 million in federal funding for our state.. There is not a day that goes by unfortunately that we don't read in our newspapers or on social media or hear on the news reports of a tragedy as a result of mental health issues. It is not long ago that our State was so seriously impacted by the tragedy of Sandy Hook. That event should continue to serve as a wakeup call to every citizen of Connecticut about the need for expanded of mental health services, as well as on-going training and education for our communities.

The mission of the regional mental health boards is to ensure services are of the highest quality by on-going review and monitoring; that they are available to all persons who need them; advocating on behalf of those impacted by mental illness so that they may have a voice in the development and provision of the services they need and lastly but no less important, working towards reducing stigma, so that no individual or family is ashamed to get the mental health services they need. The proposed cuts by the Governor would totally eliminate this vital advocacy and monitoring arm of our mental health system.

I urge you to restore these harmful cuts to ensure crucial services are available to the residents of Connecticut.

Thank you for your attention to these important services and supports.

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